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LETTER DATED 7 FEBRUARY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey to you, for the information of the members of the Security Council, the position of the Government of Burundi in response to the allegations made by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Zaire, Mr. Kamanda-wa-Kamanda, in the letter which he addressed to the President of the Security Council on 1 February 1997, concerning the involvement of Burundian soldiers in aggression against Zaire.

May I also take this opportunity to remind you of the proposal which I made to you in your capacity as President of the Security Council with a view to obtaining any possible evidence which the Kinshasa Government or any United Nations body might possess relating to the accusations by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zaire concerning the alleged involvement of Burundi in armed operations in Zairian territory.

While awaiting a response, the Government of Burundi formally rejects these false accusations.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the statement of the Government of Burundi to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nsanze TERENCE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Press release

The Government of Burundi categorically denies the unfounded allegations contained in the letter dated 1 February 1997 from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zaire addressed to the President of the Security Council, to the effect that Burundian soldiers were present in the territory of Zaire and were even captured in the course of fighting there.

The Government of Burundi is surprised that these allegations should be made at a time when the Deputy Prime Minister of Zaire, Mr. Albert Mende, was acknowledging, in a meeting attended by Burundi's Chargé d'affaires in Kinshasa on 31 January 1997, that there was no tangible evidence of Burundi's involvement in the conflict in eastern Zaire. He made it clear that that view was also shared by the Prime Minister of Zaire, with whom he had just had a meeting. Reports of these statements were broadcast by Radio France Internationale on 2 February 1997.

The Government of Burundi has, moreover, learned from the press that the spokesman of the State Department called upon Zaire's neighbours yesterday to stay out of Zaire.

Is there any need for reminders? The army of Burundi has more than enough to do within the national territory, where it is endeavouring, with the cooperation of the Administration and the population, to re-establish the conditions of security that are essential to the peace process on which the Government has embarked. For this reason and for others, Burundi has no interest in interfering in the internal problems of any of its neighbouring countries.

The Government of Burundi therefore refuses to believe that these allegations, which are likely to aggravate the situation on the Great Lakes region, can serve anyone's interests.

Bujumbura, 6 February 1997